

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 18, 2011

0257

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service Lifeline and Link Up
CC Docket No. 96-45; WC Docket 03-108

Dear Chairman Genachowski:


As you know, the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, Lifeline and Link-Up (the "Join Board") recently provided its Recommended Decision to the FCC under the above-referenced docket numbers.

We applaud the Board's efforts to expand the reach of Lifeline, while at the same time pushing forward proposals for greater transparency, efficiency and uniformity on areas such as verification procedures and sampling criteria. Competition amongst Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) is thriving and has produced dramatic gains for consumers. These recommendations will ensure a level playing field, increase accessibility and minimize waste, fraud and abuse. This is a critical effort because we concur with the broad consensus of the Joint Board and the FCC determination in America's Broadband Plan that continuing to expand Lifeline and Link-Up enrollment must be a priority.

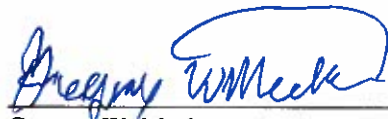
Historically, the low income support of the fund has had a very low penetration rate. While cost has grown in the low income support, it is still minimal compared to the area of high cost. The best approach to curtailing fraud and abuse is to establish an eligibility database. Accordingly, we enthusiastically support what we see as broad consensus that no cap should be applied to the low income portion of the Lifeline and Link-Up, and that FCC policies fostering open competition by wireless competitors have fueled the first meaningful increases in low income participation in many years. Finally, it is important to remember that low income support is cyclical: the great recession left nearly 10% of the country unemployed. Lifeline was there to help struggling Americans, and no eligible American should ever be denied Lifeline service because of an arbitrary cap.

We urge the Commission to consider the recommendations outlined in the report, which will foster competition, increase efficiency and expand enrollments. In this vein, the Commission should not adopt measures or practices that hinder the Lifeline subscriber or setback the progress being made in expanding enrollments. We are encouraged by the many comments made by the Joint Board and FCC stating that continued expansion of access is a top priority and we applaud these efforts.

Sincerely,



Edolphus "Ed" Towns
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

cc: Michael J. Copps, Commissioner
Robert McDowell, Commissioner
Mignon Clyburn, Commissioner
Meredith Attwell Baker, Commissioner



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

April 26, 2011

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Gregory W. Meeks
U.S. House of Representatives
2234 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Meeks:

Thank you for your letter commenting on the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service recommendations on reforming the universal service Lifeline/LinkUp program. I appreciate your thoughts and your letter has been entered into the record of the proceeding.

I am pleased to report that on March 3, 2011, the Commission adopted a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* to reform and modernize the Lifeline/LinkUp program to make it more efficient and effective and to determine how best to meet our national broadband adoption goals. The *Notice* proposes immediate reforms to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse; improve accountability; and prevent over-burdening contributors to the Universal Service Fund. These proposals include the establishment of a National Accountability Database – administered by an independent third party – to ensure that multiple carriers are not receiving support to serve the same household and that only eligible households are participating in the program. The *Notice* also proposes a pilot program, funded with savings from the reforms, to determine how Lifeline/LinkUp can best be used to increase broadband adoption and use among low-income consumers.

I look forward to working with you to ensure access to telecommunications and broadband for all Americans. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Julius Genachowski



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

April 26, 2011

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Edolphus Towns
U.S. House of Representatives
2232 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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Julius Genachowski